

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### Area Legislators to BRAC: Keep 103rd Fighter Wing At Bradley



Three state legislators who represent towns adjacent to Bradley International Airport have written the chairman of the 2005 Defense Base Closing and Realignment Commission urging the panel to reject a recommendation that the 118<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing be transferred from Bradley International Airport in

Windsor Locks to the 104<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing at Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield, Massachusetts.

“We would like to express our dismay with the Pentagon proposal to move Connecticut’s 118<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron to Massachusetts, thus leaving Connecticut, a state that has played a vital role in Operation Iraqi Freedom, without any military flying units and to respectfully request that BRAC recommend retaining the 118<sup>th</sup> Fighter squadron in Connecticut,” state Representatives Richard F. Ferrari, R-62<sup>nd</sup> District, and Ruth C. Fahrbach, R-61<sup>st</sup> District, and state Senator John A. Kissel, R-7<sup>th</sup> District, said in their letter to BRAC Chairman Anthony J. Principi.

The legislators decided to send the letter after a meeting Tuesday at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford with Connecticut Adjutant General Thaddeus J. Martin, who is playing a leading role in the effort to keep the fighter wing at Bradley International Airport.

“East Granby is very concerned about the possible loss of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing, which has been based at Bradley International Airport for many years,” Representative Ferrari said. “We consider them an integral part of our community and there is a high level of interest in keeping them here. We take pride in the contributions the 103<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing has made to the defense of our country and our state over the years. It would be a serious blow to the Air National Guard – and to East Granby and other nearby towns - if the unit is moved to Massachusetts.”

“The Connecticut National Guard performs a vital military role not only overseas, but also in the protection of the State of Connecticut and its citizens. Their loss would leave an irreplaceable void in our combined security network in times of emergencies and natural disasters,” Representative Fahrbach said.

"The Pentagon recommendation would have serious effects on our entire state, not just our region," said Senator Kissel. "If the proposed realignment goes forward it would mean the loss of all military aircraft in our state. That would be a serious detriment to our public safety here in Connecticut and hamper efforts of the National Guard to recruit and train new pilots. I am very thankful to General Martin for taking the time to meet with us. This is a very important issue and we need to make it clear that the 17 aircraft of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing are vital to the security of our state."

The legislators said there are several major flaws in the Pentagon proposal to transfer the unit to the Westfield, Mass. facility that BRAC commissioners should consider before it endorses the recommendation, including:

- The Bradley Air National Guard unit would be the first and possibly only base to support an alert detachment without any military aircraft support.
- Connecticut would be one of only five states without any flying unit whatsoever.
- Moving nine of the seventeen A-10 Thunderbolts to Barnes and retiring the remaining eight makes no sense. Unlike the Air Force's F-15s and F-16s, the A-10 is not slated to retire for many years to come.
- There are no cost savings to be gained by transferring the 118<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron to the Barnes Air National Guard Base.
- A potential job loss of 384 personnel including 143 Connecticut Guard members would directly impact our local economy. These are men and women who live in our districts, work in our districts and raise their children in our districts.